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F. #2024R00396

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- against -

HALIMA SALMAN,
also known as
“Umm al-Khattab al-Muhajir,”

Defendant.

----- X

EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, SS:

FRANCIS TANSEY, being duly sworn, deposes and states that he is a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, duly appointed according to law and acting as such.

In or about and between July 2017 and February 2019, both dates being approximate and inclusive, within the Eastern District of New York and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the United States, the defendant HALIMA SALMAN, also known as “Umm al-Khattab al-Muhajir,” a United States citizen who is expected to be first brought to and found in the Eastern District of New York, together with others, did knowingly receive military-type training, as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339D(c)(1), from and on behalf of a foreign terrorist organization, to wit: the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (“ISIS”), which at all relevant times was designated by the Secretary of State as a foreign terrorist organization, pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, knowing that ISIS was a designated foreign terrorist organization and that ISIS had engaged in and was engaging in

TO BE FILED UNDER SEAL

COMPLAINT AND
AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT
OF APPLICATION FOR
ARREST WARRANT

(18 U.S.C. § 2339D(a))

Case No. 24-MJ-350

terrorist activity and terrorism, and the defendant was a national of the United States (as defined in Section 101(a)(22) of the Immigration and Nationality Act), and the offense occurred in and affected interstate and foreign commerce.

(Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339D(a))

The source of your deponent's information and the grounds for his belief are as follows:¹

1. I am a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and have been since 2020. Since approximately July 2021, I have been assigned to the New York Field Office's Joint Terrorism Task Force ("JTTF"). In that role, I have routinely investigated counterterrorism matters similar to the investigation at issue in this application and have participated in investigations in which I have conducted witness interviews and sought and obtained various types of legal process.

2. Based on my participation in this investigation, there is probable cause to conclude that HALIMA SALMAN, also known as "Umm al-Khattab al-Muhajir," has received military type-training from ISIS, specifically, training regarding the handling and operation of an AK-47 or "Kalashnikov" style assault rifle, in Syria in or around March 2018, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339D, as set forth in more detail below.

Background on ISIS

3. ISIS is a foreign terrorist organization that, since 2013, has claimed credit for numerous terrorist activities, including attacks against Americans in the United States and

¹ Because the purpose of this Complaint is to set forth only those facts necessary to establish probable cause to arrest, I have not described all the relevant facts and circumstances of which I am aware.

against Westerners abroad. These terrorist activities are part of ISIS's broader goal of forming an Islamic state or "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria.

4. On or about October 15, 2004, the United States Secretary of State designated al-Qaeda in Iraq ("AQI"), then known as Jam'at al Tawid wa'al-Jahid, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization ("FTO") under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity under section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224.

5. On or about May 15, 2014, the Secretary of State amended the designation of AQI as an FTO under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity under section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224 to add the alias Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ("ISIL") as the FTO's primary name. The Secretary of State also added the following aliases to the FTO listing: The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham ("ISIS"—which is how the FTO will be referenced herein), The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-sh-Sham, Daesh, Dawla al Islamiya and Al-Furquan Establishment for Media Production. In an audio recording publicly released on June 29, 2014, ISIS announced a formal change of its name to the Islamic State. On or about September 21, 2015, the Secretary of State added the following aliases to the FTO listing: Islamic State, ISIL and ISIS. To date, ISIS remains a designated FTO.

Background on HALIMA SALMAN

6. The defendant HALIMA SALMAN is a United States citizen by birth and was born in the United States in or around May 1999. Based on my review of the biographical details associated with HALIMA SALMAN's U.S. Passport, available to me from U.S. border crossing records, and her birth certificate, she turned 18 years of age in or around May 2017.

7. According to U.S. border crossing records, on or about October 23, 2016, the defendant HALIMA SALMAN departed the United States from John F. Kennedy International Airport (“JFK Airport”) located in Queens, New York, within the Eastern District of New York, aboard Aeroflot Flight No. 101, bound for Moscow, Russia. The defendant was accompanied by Individual-1, whose identity is known to your affiant, together with others. Additional members of HALIMA SALMAN’s family, including Individual-2, whose identity is known to your affiant, together with others, departed the United States on or about September 27, 2016, from JFK Airport bound for Istanbul, Turkey.

8. At that time, Turkey was a common transit point to enter Syria to join ISIS, in particular via Istanbul, which has two major international airports. Also at that time, on information and belief, commercial air travel was readily available between Moscow, Russia, and Turkey.

9. HALIMA SALMAN, together with Individual-1, later traveled to Turkey and rendezvoused with Individual-2, before all proceeding into an ISIS-controlled area of Syria in or around late 2016 or early 2017.

10. When they reached Syria, Individual-2 received military-type training from ISIS and performed “ribat,” or guard-duty type services, for ISIS. Shortly thereafter, in or around May 2017, HALIMA SALMAN turned 18 years old. As described below, after turning 18 years old, HALIMA SALMAN received military training from ISIS.

11. In early 2019 in or around Baghouz, Syria, HALIMA SALMAN was captured by or surrendered to forces opposed to ISIS.

HALIMA SALMAN's Interview by the FBI

12. On or about November 11, 2023, HALIMA SALMAN was interviewed by FBI agents at a detention facility in Syria. HALIMA SALMAN was advised of her legal rights both orally and in writing, and agreed to waive those rights, orally and in writing. The interview was conducted primarily in English.

13. HALIMA SALMAN acknowledged that, along with Individual-1 and Individual-2, she had previously traveled to “the Caliphate,” which I understand to be a reference to ISIS. The defendant further acknowledged that Individual-2 was assigned to “ribat” duty for ISIS, which the defendant described as being a guard for a certain area, similar to security but not a soldier.

14. HALIMA SALMAN further stated that she had married Individual-3, a military-age male individual and member of ISIS whose identity is known to your affiant, after she had turned 18 years old.² Individual-3, like Individual-2, performed “ribat” duties for ISIS. HALIMA SALMAN stated that she did not know if Individual-2 and Individual-3 were in the same “Katiba” for ISIS; I understand “Katiba” to refer to an ISIS battalion or military unit.

15. HALIMA SALMAN also acknowledged that she had been known by the kunya, or pseudonym, “Um Khattab.”

16. HALIMA SALMAN claimed that she did not attend any type of training, was never assigned to a “Katiba,” never owned a weapon, and was never involved in any ISIS activities. Based on the evidence set forth below, I believe each of these statements was false.

² HALIMA SALMAN claimed that she had, via another individual, demanded that Individual-3 agree to getting HALIMA SALMAN and her family out of ISIS as soon as possible, and further claimed that Individual-3 agreed.

HALIMA SALMAN'S Receipt of Military Training from ISIS

17. Based upon my training and experience and my discussions with other FBI agents and law enforcement officials, I know that the National Media Exploitation Center ("NMEC") is a U.S. government entity created in or around 2001 that is located in Bethesda, Maryland. The purpose of NMEC is to serve as a clearinghouse of information that is acquired, seized, or captured outside the United States, including but not limited to information that is recorded in analog formats, such as papers or documents, and digital formats, such as the contents of electronic media, including but not limited to cellular telephones and similar electronic devices. It is my understanding that the information delivered to NMEC is referred to generally as "Collected Exploitable Material" or "CEM."

18. The sources of CEM provided to NMEC can vary, and include but are not limited to: material seized or captured during or following U.S. military, law enforcement or other government agency engagements, including material provided by foreign militaries or law enforcement officials to U.S. authorities. NMEC maintains records concerning the CEM it ingests, including documentation as available of the circumstances in which the CEM was seized, captured, or delivered, such as time, date, and location of seizure.

19. Once CEM is provided to NMEC, it is indexed so that the collection of CEM can be queried. In connection with this investigation, the FBI requested information from NMEC on a number of topics, including but not limited to whether any CEM had been obtained relating to HALIMA SALMAN.

20. Based upon information found in NMEC's databases and from my review of the contents, there is a cellular device recovered in Syria that the FBI assesses was used by Individual-3 (the "Individual-3 Device") and that contains information relating to this

investigation, in particular to HALIMA SALMAN's conduct, as set forth in more detail below. Based on my participation in this investigation, I have learned that the Individual-3 Device was recovered in early 2019 in the area of the Middle Euphrates River Valley in Syria.

21. Records obtained from the Individual-3 Device were provided to NMEC (the "Individual-3 Device NMEC Records"). Based upon my review of the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records, my review appears to confirm that the Individual-3 Device belonged to Individual-3, HALIMA SALMAN's spouse.

22. Based upon my review of documents found in the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records, I know that there is an image file containing an Arabic language document that appears to have been issued by the ISIS "Diwan al-Jund," ("Department of Soldiers"). The document is depicted below as Figure 1:



Figure 1

23. Based upon consultations with an Arabic linguist, I understand that the document states in sum and substance that "Umm al-Khattab al-Muhajir" is the spouse of

Individual-3, and refers to Individual-3 by his “kunya,” or nom de guerre, Abu Ali al-Almani al-Khorasani (“Abu Ali of Germany and Afghanistan”); states the “personnel number” assigned to Individual-3 by ISIS; and further states that “Umm al-Khattab al-Muhajir” has completed her military training successfully and is qualified to receive ammunition for the “AK47” already in her possession. The letter is signed with a signature stamp indicating that it is issued by an ISIS unit called the “Nusaybah bint-Ka’ab,”³ also referred to as the “Nusaybah Katiba” or the “Katiba Nusaybah.”

24. The metadata associated with the document image file depicted contains a date of March 17, 2018. Accordingly, I believe the document confirming HALIMA SALMAN’s completion of the military training described was generated on or around or before that date, at which time HALIMA SALMAN was approximately 18 years old.

25. Based on my training and experience and work on counterterrorism cases in particular cases relating to ISIS, I understand that in or around late 2016, ISIS approved the creation of the Nusaybah Katiba. The Nusaybah Katiba was an ISIS military battalion or unit composed solely of female members of ISIS, principally those who were or had been married to male ISIS fighters. Members of the Nusaybah Katiba received training on the use of various weapons, including but not limited to AK-47 style assault rifles.

26. Based on my further review of images found in the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records, I know that there are multiple image files that depict a female whom I believe is HALIMA SALMAN, at least one of which depicts what appears to be a Kalashnikov or AK-47

³ It is my understanding that Nusaybah bint-Ka’ab was a female warrior and contemporary of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

style assault rifle in the background, and several of which depict what I recognize to be the flag of ISIS in the background. Two such images are depicted below:

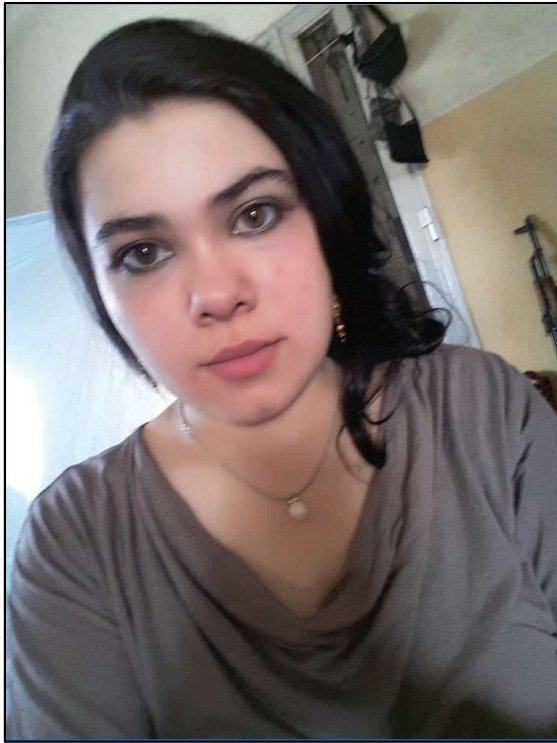


Figure 2⁴

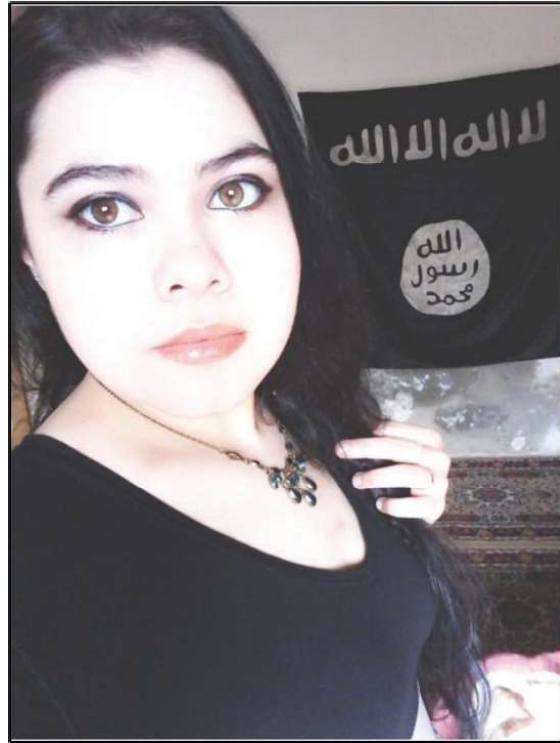


Figure 3⁵

27. There is a video in the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records that depicts an individual, whom I believe is HALIMA SALMAN, walking while brandishing what appears to be an AK-47 style assault rifle. The individual depicted in the video also speaks in English, with what I would characterize as an American accent or dialect.

⁴ The metadata associated with Figure 2 reflects that it was taken on or about April 25, 2018, on which date HALIMA SALMAN was approximately 18 years old.

⁵ The metadata associated with Figure 3 reflects that it was taken on or about February 15, 2018, on which date HALIMA SALMAN was approximately 18 years old. Furthermore, the image of Figure 3 on the Individual-3 Device depicted this image reversed such that the Arabic text in the ISIS flag was backwards, and HALIMA SALMAN was depicted to be on the right side of the image. Figure 3 has been reversed so that the ISIS flag is displayed as I believe it was at the time the photograph was taken, with the Arabic text reading in the correct direction.

28. Federal law enforcement presented multiple images to a person whose identity is known to me, who is familiar with HALIMA SALMAN and has seen HALIMA SALMAN (“Witness-1”),⁶ including at least one image that was retrieved from the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records and that depicts a female whom I believe is HALIMA SALMAN. Witness-1 identified the female in the image file sourced from the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records to be HALIMA SALMAN. The image shown to Witness-1 is depicted below as Figure 4:



Figure 4⁷

⁶ Witness-1 has known Individual-1 since Individual-1’s birth, and has known HALIMA SALMAN since HALIMA SALMAN’s birth. I am unaware of any criminal history for Witness-1 and unaware of any reason to suspect bias on the part of Witness-1 against HALIMA SALMAN.

⁷ The metadata associated with Figure 4 reflects that it was taken on or about

WHEREFORE, your deponent respectfully requests that a warrant issue for the arrest of the defendant HALIMA SALMAN so that she may be dealt with according to law.



FRANCIS TANSEY
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn to before me *telephonically*
this
6th day of May, 2024

Vera M. Scanlon

THE HONORABLE VERA M. SCANLON
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

December 11, 2018, on which date HALIMA SALMAN was approximately 19 years old. Figure 4 was one of several images presented to Witness-1 drawn from the Individual-3 Device NMEC Records that depicted an individual I believe is HALIMA SALMAN. Witness-1 identified one of these images as not depicting HALIMA SALMAN but depicting an individual who I know to be HALIMA SALMAN's adult sister, who also accompanied HALIMA SALMAN, Individual-1 and Individual-2 to Turkey and then Syria in late 2016. I note that, based upon my own review of these images, HALIMA SALMAN and her adult sister have similar facial characteristics.